United Nations E/CN.6/2009/NGO/38

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2008

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-third session
2-13 March 2009
Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

Statement submitted by New Japan Women's Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2009/1.

08-65304 (E) 190109

Statement*

Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association (NJWA) has been working, among others, for the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights of women and children, and solidarity with women around the world for peace. As a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, NJWA has attended United Nations sponsored World Conferences of Women and sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The year 2009 commemorates the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The struggle and movements carried out by women around the world over many generations for gender equality, human rights, better living conditions and peace, combined with the effort of the international community under the initiative of the United Nations, have made the awareness that "women's rights are human rights" universal, helping national Governments to take legal and other measures based on the international agreements. However, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2008 (featuring 130 countries), while Norway tops the ranking with the index score of 0.82, which means it has closed over 80 percent of equality gap, the lowest in rank scores only 0.45. There are still much to be done to achieve gender equality.

From the viewpoint that peace is essential to the progress in gender equality and women's rights, NJWA expresses its great concern over the fact that the world military spending totalled $1339 billion in 2007, making an increase of 45 percent since 1998 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 2008). In Iraq and Afghanistan, innocent citizens, including women and children are being killed or injured; in Africa, particularly in Democratic Republic of Congo and other Great Lakes countries, the ongoing armed conflicts have resulted in tens of thousands of refugees living in dire situation. Women are being victimized by sexual and all other forms of violence. It is also a grave problem that global warming and climate change are increasing the occurrence of natural disasters with escalating damage. It is time for us to reflect about what is real security for humankind and the earth, going back to the founding spirit of the United Nations, that is, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Another problem facing both developed and developing countries is increase of poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor. The World of Work Report 2008 published by the International Institute for Labour Studies of the International Labour Organization notes that income inequalities grew dramatically between the early 1990's and 2005 in most regions of the world. It says this reflects the impact of financial globalization. We have witnessed speculation driving the prices of oil and food, affecting not only the poor and developing countries but also daily lives of people throughout the world. What is needed for finding solutions to these problems and for attaining the Millennium Development Goals is to establish fair economic rules and thus, to eliminate inequalities in income.

In his remarks to the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women on February 25, 2008, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said, "Gender inequality is hampering progress

* Issued without formal editing.

towards the Millennium Development Goals -- our common vision to build a better world in the 21st century." If we are to accomplish gender equality and "build a better world in the 21st century," we must redirect the immense amount of funds currently spent on the military to human needs, including measures to promote gender equality and to combat climate change - investment for the future of our planet. NJWA calls on Member States to demonstrate political will to change policies in this direction.

The fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women will consider the theme: "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving," and evaluate progress of the implementation of the agreed conclusions "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels" adopted at the fiftieth session. NJWA considers that "equal sharing of responsibilities" and "equal participation in decision-making processes" are vital to promoting gender equality and the advancement of women, as well as are the key to achieve progress in other areas.

NJWA calls on Member States gathering at the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women:

- To learn from the good practices with positive results about concrete policies to make "equal sharing of responsibilities" possible, and to express their political will to follow such examples in their own countries.

- Taking note that to facilitate equal sharing of family responsibilities while working, it is absolutely necessary to foster an environment that enables both women and men to take leaves for childcare or nursing care for the elderly; to do their utmost to eliminate stereotyped gender roles; to reduce work hours; and to improve the care system with adequate financial assistance. To press corporations to fulfill their social responsibilities by achieving parity of treatment between regular and non-regular workers, so as to eliminate discrimination between them regarding eligibility for the care leave system. To ban the replacement of regular employment by non-regular workers.

- To include sex education, based on reproductive health and rights, in public education not only for the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection but also for promoting women's health throughout their lifecycle.

- To actively participate in the international campaign launched by United Nations Secretary General to end violence against women, as part of the efforts to remove one of the major obstacles to women's empowerment and political participation. To make national plans, and to implement in good faith international agreements such as the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

- To eliminate disadvantages facing women in entering parliament, through, among others, changing the electoral system for the better.

- To make a gender analysis on the impact of the widening gap and increasing poverty, as well as of the present financial crisis. To provide support for the socially vulnerable, including women, children, the elderly, and those with disabilities.

- To make concerted, strong efforts with adequate resources to address the urgent issues regarding the survival of humankind and the globe, such as climate change, frequent occurrence of natural disaster, and food crisis, and to include gender perspectives in dealing with these issues.

Toward achieving the goals of "Gender Equality, Development and Peace," NJWA urges the United Nations to play a more effective role by establishing at the earliest possible time a "women-specific entity" led by an Under-Secretary-General, adequately and sufficiently resourced both financially and in terms of personnel. As a women's organization with a 47-year-history of working on the ground to realize all kinds of demands of women, the New Japan Women's Association extends its solidarity to women all over the world striving toward the common goals of "Gender Equality, Development and Peace," and expresses its resolve to commit itself to building a just, peaceful and sustainable society free of war and nuclear weapons, hand in hand with all the people who share this vision.